Phoenix Historical Society
Organized in 1998; Opened in 1999

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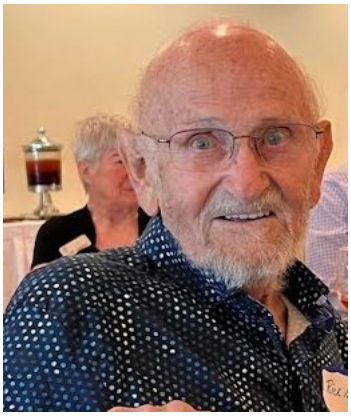
Susan Nunes photo

Rick Nagel, a 1954 graduate of Phoenix High School, was a member and supporter of the Phoenix Talent Alumni Association for a number of years and is seen attending the June, 2026 annual reunion held at Phoenix High School.

Remembering Rick Nagel



Longtime Phoenix Talent School board member Rick Nagel passed away August 5, 2026 on his 90th birthday.

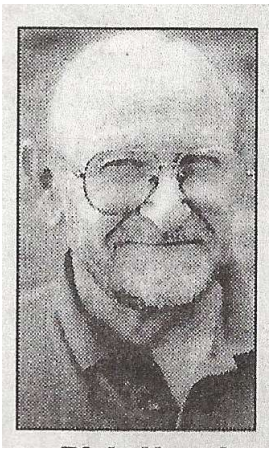
For 27 years, since he was first elected in 1999, Rick served students and families with wisdom, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to ensuring our students were afforded every opportunity to succeed in Phoenix-Talent and beyond.

In his professional life, Rick was a very successful certified public accountant and an accounting instructor, but those who knew him understood that he was so much more than that--a father, a husband, a friend to many, and a huge Phoenix High sports fan who served as the official public address announcer for the Pirates' 2011 boys basketball state championship team.

He was also a strong proponent of safe school initiatives whose advocacy is a major reason PTS has school resource officers at both Phoenix High School and Talent Middle School.

"On a personal level, it is difficult to put into words what Rick meant to me," PTS Superintendent Brent Barry expressed in a letter to district staff. "I am deeply grateful for his friendship, mentorship, and unwavering support. He made our district a better place, and his influence will continue to be felt by all who had the privilege of knowing and working alongside him."
From Phoenix-Talent Schools *Facebook* article.

Rick served as a volunteer for approximately 25 years and was deeply beloved by everyone within the Britt Music & Arts Festival sphere. "Rick was an extraordinary presence on the Britt hill for decades," Britt President & CEO Abby McKee said. "For the last few years, he contributed the highest number of volunteer hours of any individual, and his delight in greeting patrons exemplified what it means to be 'by the community, for the community.' "Britt is what it is thanks to people like Rick, and we will miss him. We're so grateful to have been a part of his life."
From Facebook article.



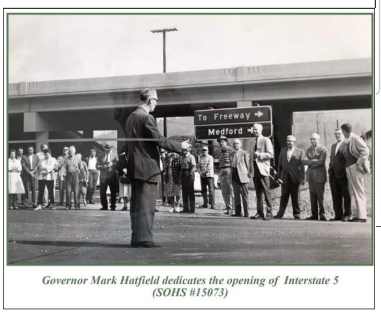
In the 1990s, Rick would nearly give up his certified public accounting practice during the month of June and the first week of July to chair Ashland's Fourth of July Committee. Civic activities at that time: Coach for women's softball team; board of directors, Ashland Chamber of Commerce; Ashland Rotary Club; board member of local theater groups.
Mail Tribune, June 1997

I-5

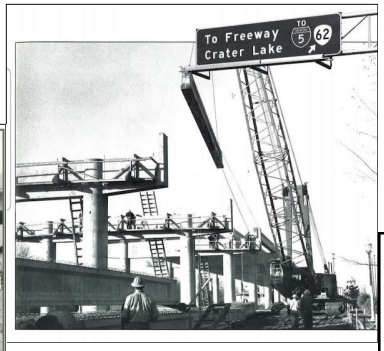
Oregon was the first of the three West Coast states to finish its portion of the new winter state highway system, numbered interstate 5, which would eventually stretch from the Canadian border to Mexico. Oregon's portion of I-5 covered 308 miles and cost nearly $300 million dollars, over 90% of which was financed by the federal government.

No longer would Oregonians have to stop and go through every small town along the way from the Columbia River to the California border. It was not a road for "auto-bubbling" or "joyriding," but a system of smooth freeways, with on- and off-ramps, that bypassed smaller cities and towns and circled around and over larger ones, a road for getting from one place to another with maximum efficiency.

By Gwen Pettey
(Wikipedia...History of I-5)



Governor Mark Hatfield dedicates the opening of Interstate 5 (SOHS #15073)



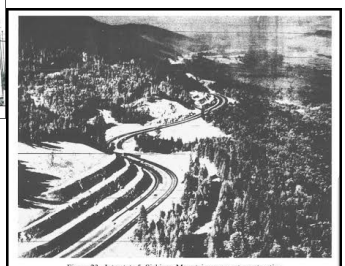
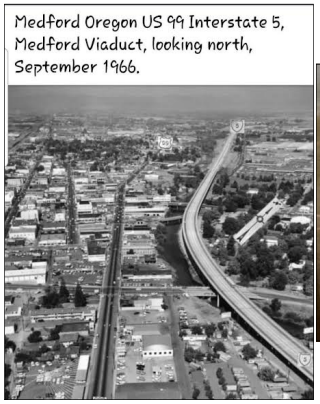
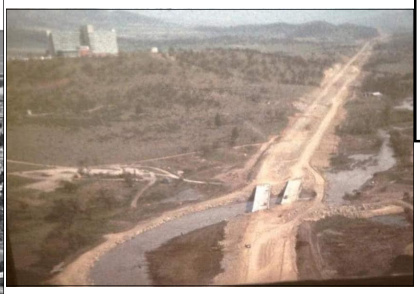


Figure 23. Interstate 5, Siskiyou Mountains segment construction (Source: *Ashland Daily Tidings*, 3 January 1966).

The southbound lanes [of the Siskiyou segment] were opened to traffic on June 21, 1966. The northbound lanes were opened on December 21, 1966, to aid the Christmas holiday traffic traveling through Oregon.


Medford Oregon US 99 Interstate 5, Medford Viaduct, looking north, September 1966.



Rogue Valley Manor

Rogue Valley Manor construction began in 1959. In 1955, an ecumenical community group of Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians came together to address the need for providing care for the seniors of southern Oregon. Their discussion led to the formation of a not-for-profit organization, which purchased 16 acres in Medford on Barneburg Hill and built the original 10-story Rogue Valley Manor building.

Opening its doors in 1961, Rogue Valley Manor is the longest standing accredited Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC on the west coast.

In the 1960s-1970s independent living villas, cottages and extra apartment homes spread outward along the hillside.

In the 1980s campus amenities included art studios, fitness areas and expanded residential neighborhood routes.

In 1990 present leadership formed the non-profit corporation Pacific Retirement Services to direct broader senior outreach and manage multi-community operations.

In the 2000s-present the campus expanded to roughly 700 acres housing nearly 1,000 residents, featuring robust on-site healthcare, golf courses, and ongoing neighborhood additions like the planned Fairway Village expansion.

From the Internet

Phoenix Historical Society Board Members

Dick Croly: President

Ken Kantor: Vice President

Dorothy Cotton: Secretary

Dorothy Cotton: Treasurer

Lorraine Sexton

Margaret Croly

Phoenix library unveils new 4,000-square-foot pollinator garden

Idea for new space inspired by community feedback following 2020 Labor Day wildfires as nod to resilience and renewal

The Phoenix library unveiled its new pollinator garden with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday morning, September 20, 2026.

Bees and butterflies in the Phoenix area have been happily migrating to the new pollinator garden at the back of the Phoenix Library.

The garden includes a wide range of drought-resistant plants from flowers to ferns that are meant to attract and support pollinators.

The space also includes a scenic pathway that blends with the natural setting and includes a wooden bridge at the center, as well as multiple seating areas to enjoy the tranquil terrain.

The idea for the garden was inspired by community feedback following the Almeda and South Obenchain fires in September 2020, and the green space represents renewal, resilience and sustainability in the Phoenix community, supporters said. A listening session was held in October 2022, and citizens listed a need for natural areas and flora and fauna after the fire.

"When this community was asked what it wanted for its library in the heart of this devastation..the community imagined a way to help bring back the flora and fauna that had been lost; to create a space that would support and sustain life, a place where pollinators could thrive, where people could learn, where children could explore," said Ginny Auer, executive director of the Jackson County Library Foundation

The organization relied on the help and expertise of multiple companies, groups and organizations.

From article by James Sloan for the *Rogue Valley Times*.

William M. Mathes - Early Settler

William M. Mathes was 23 when he came to Oregon, hunting buffalo, fighting Indians and enduring the hardships along the way. In November 1852 he reached the Rogue Valley and engaged in placer mining at the ancient pickings west of Jacksonville.

Spring of 1853 he took a donation land claim 1 3/4 miles northeast of Phoenix and lived there until spring of 1859, raising hogs for bacon which he supplied to the miners.

Mathes returned to Wisconsin in 1861 and married Christine Riddell. After a long journey they arrived in San Francisco where they took a steamer up the Sacramento River to Red Bluff.

At this point Mathes ran out of money and put his family on the stage to Phoenix while he shouldered his rifle and footed it up the Siskiyous and down to the Rogue Valley. On reaching their homestead in Phoenix they discovered their herd had dwindled to one cow and one hog.

They lived their first winter in a log cabin with just a dirt floor. During the first two years Mathes was unable to buy a team. He carried his wood from the forest on his back. When he had produce to go to market in Phoenix he carried it on his back and exchanged it for needed merchandise, which he brought home the same way.

Mr. and Mrs. Mathes had six children. They moved to Ashland in 1896. William died at his residence at 115 North Main in July 1914 and was buried at the Phoenix Pioneer Cemetery.

Shared by Marlene Biddle
Ref (MMT June 20, 1954

Enjoying the Spring Potluck in June

Phoenix Historical Society & Museum
607 N. Church Street
P. O. Box 1466
Phoenix, Oregon 97535

Telephone (541) 512-0614

Open Thursday thru Saturday
1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Any historical information regarding Phoenix would be much appreciated by anyone receiving this newsletter. Please send to above address or editor.

Become a member of Phoenix Historical Society for just $10.00 a year per person. Join now and help preserve the history of Phoenix and the surrounding area.
Regular PHS meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at **7:00 p.m. at the Phoenix Museum.**

This 'n That

Dorothy Cotton and Lorraine Sexton, representing the Phoenix Historical Society/Museum, have been setting up at the Phoenix Grange during the Phoenix, Oregon Second Friday Art Walk being held each month. They've encountered several interested visitors that were unaware that Phoenix even had a museum. It's nice to get the word out!

Welcome back Amanda Claflin! After living and working in Portland for a few years, Amanda is once again volunteering as a docent on occasional Saturdays, becoming involved in museum activities and following in the footsteps of her grandmother, Dorothy Claflin.

Vicki Taylor, Marilyn and Ken Kantor at Spring Potluck

Come join us for our Annual Potluck, Membership Drive & Meeting

September 8, 2026
6:00 pm
Phoenix Museum

Bring a dish to share and your own table service. Drinks provided.

Since September is our membership month, it is a good time to renew your membership. If you are a friend of the Phoenix Historical Society, but not a member, it's a good time to think about joining.
Hope to see you at the Potluck!